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A NEW CHAPTER OUT OF THE LIFE OF ISAIAH

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The prophecy against Shebna, Isa. 22:15-25, belongs to the many unsolved problems of biblical interpretation. What was the occasion of this terrific arraignment of Shebna? Was it simply because of the man's personal character, or was it because he also stood for tendencies and policies in the national life of which Isaiah did not approve? Was the prophecy of Shebna's banishment and death fulfilled, or must it be classed among the unfulfilled predictions? Did Eliakim really succeed to Shebna's office, and, if so, was he able to maintain himself in it? To all these questions the most contradictory answers have been given. Especially in regard to the banishment of Shebna do we seem to be left in the dark. Kamphausen can do no better than conclude an exhaustive discussion of this prophecy¹ by citing the negative results already arrived at by Delitzsch. Delitzsch asks:

Did Shebna fall into the hands of the Assyrians, and was he carried away, as might have happened without any general Assyrian captivity? Or was the judgment threatened against him averted by his repentance and personal humiliation? *We find no answer to these and other questions.* One thing only is certain: that the prophecy would not have been here if it had been discredited by the event.

This recent contribution of German learning is no advance upon the position taken in the one great American commentary on Isaiah published sixty years ago. Alexander says:

It is a common usage of the Scripture, and of this book [Isaiah] in particular, to record a divine command and not its execution, leaving the latter to be inferred from the former *as a matter of course.*² . . . If it [the Shebna prophecy] had failed, it would not have been recorded among the prophets.

In other words, in this case, as in so many others where the exegesis and interpretation of Scripture present difficulties, refuge is taken in

¹ *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. V, pp. 43-74. Subsequent citations from Kamphausen refer to this article.

² Italics here and in all subsequent citations are mine.

dogmatics. But there are a good many unfortunates, in these days of transition, who are unable to feel entirely secure in this hiding-place. If it is permissible to speculate in the interest of dogmatics, it is permissible to speculate also in the interest of historical criticism. The prophecy before us in which the data are at once so interesting in their suggestiveness and yet so scanty, tempts to such speculation.

Isa. 22:15-25 falls, for purposes of discussion, into three sections: vss. 15-18, vss. 19-23, and vss. 24, 25.

I. There is a consensus of opinion as to the general meaning of the first of these sections. Isaiah is instructed to go to a certain high official and rebuke him for hewing out his tomb among the tombs of the Jewish nobility. This officer has no family claim or any other claim ("What hast thou here? or, *Whom* hast thou here") which would entitle him to such a privilege. Instead, therefore, of being permitted to be buried in this choice locality, the threat of banishment and death in a distant land is pronounced against this presuming official. Several things are to be noted in regard to this passage. The official addressed is in all probability a parvenu who had arrogated to himself rights belonging to the Jewish aristocracy. He may even have been a foreigner.³ The form of his name would possibly imply this. The circumstances attending this prophecy are assumed to be well known, for they are not explained. (a) For example, בֵּית would naturally, though not necessarily, imply that the official was within some house or inclosure, possibly the burying-ground. (b) הָיָה would also suggest that the personality of the official was well known. (c) The immediate occasion of the rebuke in vss. 16 and 17 can only be inferred from the casual allusions in vss. 15 and 16. There is no word of explanation given. (d) Even the title of the official, סֵכֶן, seems to be a general title, and does not allow us to determine what particular office he filled. Thus this part of the prophecy, vss. 15-18, while undoubtedly quite intelligible to a contemporary of Isaiah, is a riddle whose meaning *must be guessed at*. Time, place, occasion, personality, and position of the official addressed, all are left to inference. Fortunately, the riddle is in this case fairly easy to read, especially as someone has kindly furnished a key.

³ Already suggested by Calvin, and held by most commentators.

Vs. 15*b* is rightly taken as a later explanatory addition, very possibly the misplaced title of the prophecy, explaining who "this official" was.⁴ That it is not an original part of the prophecy seems tolerably clear (*a*) from the fact that, as we have just seen, the prophecy does not explain anything about the historical occasion which gave rise to it. The *הִנֵּה* is quite in keeping with the generally allusive character of the prophecy.⁵ It assumes that the personality of the *סֵכֵן* is known. Hence the definition of the *סֵכֵן* immediately following is unexpected. (*b*) The change of *אל* to *על* also makes in favor of the secondary character of vs. 15*b*. It thus has every appearance of being added on to explain who the *סֵכֵן* was, and what was his office. He was major-domo. The prophet himself may reasonably be supposed to have known these facts already.

We are still in the dark, however, as to the real cause of Isaiah's indignation. It seems scarcely probable that the prophet would make such a bitter attack upon Shebna solely on the ground of certain personal traits of character. The language of the threat implies intense excitement, and can be adequately accounted for only on the supposition that something lies back of this scene which is not visible on its surface. This view is corroborated by vs. 18*b*. In the prophet's opinion, Shebna had brought shame upon the house of his master, presumably the king. We may easily suppose that Shebna had gained a position of great influence in Jerusalem, and was using this influence to further designs which the prophet did not approve. These designs may have been adopted with the intention of advancing his own selfish interests, but they also involved the king. Shebna exerted a bad influence in the community. But along what lines, political or religious, we *can only guess*.⁶

II. There is agreement, again, as to the general meaning of vss. 19-23. *In their present connection* they can be naturally interpreted only of a promise that Eliakim would supplant Shebna in the office of major domo. In vs. 19 Shebna is to be pulled down from his

⁴ So Cheyne, Duhm, and Marti.

⁵ Of course, it might be held that *הִנֵּה* was spoken only in contempt (Calvin, Delitzsch, Dillmann); but this view is opposed by the allusive character of the passage as a whole.

⁶ It is usually supposed that Shebna was a member of the pro-Egyptian party (Delitzsch, Dillmann).

office, and in vss. 20-23 Eliakim is to be installed in it. The key of the house of David would also naturally suggest the office of the major-domo which Eliakim is to occupy. Yet, in spite of this apparently close connection in subject between vss. 15-18 and vss. 19-23, there is a distinct break between these sections. In vss. 15-18 the prophet speaks of Jehovah in the third person ("Behold! Jehovah is casting thee out," etc.). In vss. 20-23 the first person is used ("I will call *my* servant," etc.). In coming to vss. 20-23 from vss. 15-18, we would naturally suppose Isaiah to be the speaker in the former verses. Yet this is not the case. Eliakim could scarcely be spoken of as Isaiah's servant. Undoubtedly, God is intended to be regarded as the speaker in vss. 20-23. But there is nothing to explain this sudden change of persons. We would at least expect, "*and Jehovah said*, In that day will I call." If we turn to vs. 19, we find no explanation there of this change, but instead a new difficulty. While the first person, "I shall thrust thee," in vs. 19*a*, agrees with the first person in vss. 20-23, the third person, "he shall pull thee down," in vs. 19*b*, agrees with the third person in vss. 15-18. This change of persons in the same verse is most unnatural. The same person should be read with both verbs. But which verb should be conformed to the other? This will depend upon the connection of the verse. Is it to be taken with vss. 15-18, or with vss. 20-23? Vs. 19 is better taken with vss. 20-23, and for the following reason: Vss. 15-18 are complete in themselves. In these verses the worst is threatened—exile and death. This, of course, includes Shebna's deposition from office. Vs. 19 begins the subject anew. Shebna is to be deposed from his office, and Eliakim is to take it. Vs. 19 is thus the basis of vss. 20-23 rather than the conclusion of vss. 15-18. Vs. 19 extracts the implication of vss. 15-18 in order to explain vss. 20-23. In other words, vs. 19 is *the connecting link*⁷ between vss. 15-18 and vss. 20-23, but its logical connection is with the latter verses. This being the case, the last verb should be emended to the first person. This emendation may be the more confidently adopted because of the frequency of the confusion between נ and ך.⁸ Accordingly, the abrupt change of person must be regarded as beginning

⁷ Cf. Dillmann, Duhm, and Marti.

⁸ So Duhm and Marti.

at vs. 19 rather than at vs. 20, and a distinct break is thus seen to exist between vss. 15-18 and vss. 19-23. The possible significance of this will be considered later.

III. In the exegesis of vss. 24 and 25 we meet with our first serious divergence among the commentators. In vs. 23 the prophet promises that Eliakim would be fastened as a nail in a sure place. In vs. 25 it is stated that the nail in the sure place will give way and be cut down, together with all that hangs on it. Here is a flat contradiction—a contradiction that would utterly defeat the intended effect of the preceding prophecy. If, in the same breath in which Shebna was told that Eliakim was to occupy his office, it was also stated that Eliakim would likewise be disgracefully deposed, the sting of the threat against Shebna would be largely drawn. Hence the embarrassment of the commentators. Delitzsch, feeling the incongruity of vss. 24 and 25 in a prophecy directed against Shebna, suggests that Isaiah “wrote down at one time what had been revealed to him on *two different occasions*, and what had afterward come to pass.” Bredenkamp and G. A. Smith also regard vss. 24 and 25 as a later addition by Isaiah himself. This would avoid the difficulty of supposing vss. 24 and 25 to be spoken to Shebna. But these verses are equally inconsistent with the attitude of the prophet toward Eliakim in vss. 19-23. What is the cause of this sudden change of attitude? Why should the prophet in one moment make the most generous and unconditional promises to Eliakim—promises of which he himself evidently heartily approves—and in the next moment predict Eliakim’s disgraceful downfall? Surely we have the right to expect of a writer who wishes to be understood some word of explanation for so remarkable a transition. Bredenkamp infers from vs. 24 that Eliakim’s administration had gradually become corrupted with nepotism, and that Isaiah prophesies Eliakim’s ruin in consequence. This view, of course, hangs with the theory that vss. 24 and 25 were a later addition to vss. 19-23, written after the evil tendencies of Eliakim’s administration had begun to manifest themselves. But would these changed conditions, supposed to be implied in vss. 24 and 25, be left to inference, while the verses are attached to what precedes, as if part of a prophecy to Eliakim, spoken at an earlier date? Orelli and G. A. Smith interpret vss. 24 and 25 conditionally,

as a warning to Eliakim: "Great honor is to be yours, Eliakim, but if you indulge in the nepotism of Shebna, you, too, will fall"(!). But it is noticeable that neither critic ventures to translate vss. 24 and 25 as a conditional sentence. Their paraphrases and their translations significantly differ in this respect.⁹ It is grammatically most unnatural, if not quite impossible, to treat vss. 24 and 25 as a conditional sentence. Such a warning, furthermore, would be quite out of place after vs. 23^b, in which Eliakim is told by the prophet himself that he will bring honor to his father's house.

The favorite method of harmonizing vss. 24 and 25 with the context has been to suppose that at vs. 25 the subject returns to Shebna.¹⁰ Shebna is the nail in the sure place that is to give way. To my mind, this solution of the difficulty is absolutely impossible. On any sound principle of exegesis, the nail in vs. 25 must refer to the same person as the nail in vs. 23. It is simply astonishing to read in Kamphausen that

the reference of vs. 25 to Eliakim is only *apparently* applicable, if we go back *mechanically* to vs. 22. Here, at any rate, Eliakim is denoted יֵיתָר or nail, so that from a *superficial* . . . consideration one may believe himself justified in viewing יֵיתָר in vs. 25 as so referring back to vs. 23 that the announcement of Eliakim's fall is thereby intended. But an *unprejudiced* exegesis which has its glance directed to the whole of the section can only agree with Rosenmüller in accepting the view of Rashi and Kimchi . . . which regards vs. 25 as announcing the fall of Shebna, who was at that time still in the possession of the highest office under the king.¹¹

"Apparently"(!), "mechanically"(!), "superficial"(!), "unprejudiced"(!). The reader may be safely left to decide for himself as to the "unprejudiced" character of the first three words. Is it

⁹ Smith translates, for example: "They shall hang upon him all the weight of his father's house, the scions and the offspring (terms contrasted as degrees of worth) all the little vessels, from vessels of cups to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith Jehovah of Hosts, shall the peg give way." The paraphrase reads: "Catching at the figure with which his designation of Eliakim closed, that Eliakim would be a peg in a solid wall, a throne on which the glory of his father's house might settle, Isaiah reminds the much-encumbered statesman that the firmest peg would give way *if* you hang too much on it; the strongest man may be pulled down by his dependent and indolent family."

¹⁰ So Calvin, Alexander, Dillmann, Kamphausen.

¹¹ Kamphausen, p. 55.

really "mechanical" to go back to vs. 23 from 25? It may be so, if by "mechanical" we mean *automatic*. Why Kamphausen urges attention to "the whole of the section" is clear from what he says farther on: ". . . vs. 25, regarded as a threat against Eliakim, would be entirely motiveless, and can therefore be understood only of Shebna;"¹² which, being interpreted, means that vs. 25 *can only be brought into harmony with its context by an impossible exegesis*. Now, the fact is that all those who refer vs. 25 to Shebna feel the necessity of interpolating some qualifying word or phrase which would distinguish the nail in vs. 25 from the nail in vs. 23. Calvin refers to the nail that was fastened in a sure place "by way of concession;" i. e., in men's eyes it seemed to be fastened in a sure place. Dillmann inserts the word "hitherto" (*bisher*)—"the nail that was *hitherto* inserted in a sure place." Kamphausen inserts the word "*now*." One wonders why Isaiah himself, who was such a master of literary form, did not insert some such word to avoid being misunderstood. Is it really because he supposed these *subaudita* were axiomatic? This can hardly be maintained. Since the evident intention is to identify the nail in vs. 25 with the nail in vs. 23, only one conclusion is permissible. Exegesis is helpless to account for the contradiction. Resort must be made to criticism. The same person could not have written vss. 20-23 and vs. 25.

This conclusion is confirmed when we consider vs. 24. May I be pardoned for citing the notes which I made upon vs. 24 before any authorities upon the passage had been consulted?

Vs. 24*a*. The glory of his future line will date from Eliakim. Can vs. *a* refer to the fact that a new dynasty will date from Eliakim? Vs. 24*b*. There is no parallel to this in the LXX. The figure of the nail underlies it, and upon this nail *kitchen* utensils are to be hung. But this certainly cannot be thought of as adding dignity to the figure of the nail, but rather as turning the figure into contempt. This would seem to agree with vs. 25. The nail fastened in a sure place will be broken, and all that hung upon it [the kitchen utensils?] will be cut off.

Since this note was written I have found that I have been anticipated in this view of the passage by many writers since the days of Hitzig. Duhm uses the very word "kitchen" which had occurred to me in this connection. Is not this view of vs. 24 the normal view? It will hardly do to urge in this connection the difference between oriental

¹² Kamphausen, p. 71.

and occidental taste, and to maintain that vs. 24 would make a different impression upon an oriental from that which it would make upon an occidental. The oriental writers, especially a writer of such imaginative power as Isaiah, may be credited with the ability to distinguish between worthy and ignoble figures, and would scarcely use basins and jugs hanging on a nail as symbols of the dignity accruing to the family of Eliakim from Eliakim's position.¹³ Vs. 24b may therefore be unhesitatingly regarded as expressing contempt. I was wrong, however, in thinking that vs. 24a still agreed with vss. 20-23. It is much better, with Duhm and Marti, following Hitzig, to regard vs. 24a as also expressing contempt. It is not impossible that the כְּבוֹד in vs. 24 is, as these writers suggest, an intentional play on the כְּבוֹד of vs. 23. The "glory" is a "burden."

The choice of words in vs. 24a also agrees very well with the ironical interpretation of the verse proposed. צַפְעוֹת is a word found only here, but in connection with צִאֲצָאִים may best be translated "suckers," and with the same shade of contempt implied in it as in the English word. Is it, further, only a chance coincidence that צַפְעוֹת is almost exactly like צִפְפִּי ("dung"), and that צִאֲצָאִים reminds of צִאֲהָ (Isa. 28:8); or have we here an *intentional* play on words, as in the well-known case of Baalzebul for Baalzebub?¹⁴ In any case, we may feel assured that in vss. 24 and 25 we have an expression of the greatest contempt for Eliakim and his family—an expression which can be attributed only to an opponent of Eliakim, and hence to a different person from the writer of vss. 19-23. Who was this enemy of Eliakim? What called out such bitter hostility? *Again we can only guess.* It would seem, from the relationship of our three sections to one another, as if Shebna and Eliakim were rivals. Prophecy evidently favors Eliakim and opposes Shebna. These two men may

¹³ I would really rather trust the taste of Isaiah than the taste of some of his occidental commentators. When Delitzsch and Kamphausen, for example, seek to harmonize the somewhat incompatible figures of the tent-pin and the throne in vs. 23 by suggesting that Eliakim's family can sit on the tent-pin as on a throne, one wonders what the oriental Isaiah would have said to that.

¹⁴ Cf. also Kittel's remarks on the name Jezebel (*Königs-Bücher*, p. 135), and the evidences of the contempt in which Jeroboam was held by later generations, as seen in the names applied to his mother, e. g., "leprous" (Zeruah), 1 Kings 11:26, and *πρόρη* (in the LXX addition to 1 Kings 12:24 ff.).

very well be thought of as the secular leaders of the prophetic and anti-prophetic parties in Jerusalem, respectively. Vss. 24 and 25 must then have been uttered by a member of the anti-prophetic party. It is no doubt difficult to understand how vss. 24 and 25 came to be attached to sayings emanating from the prophetic party, but because we are not able to explain this strange phenomenon, we are nevertheless not at liberty to deny the reality of its existence. If the above conclusion as to vss. 24 and 25 be adopted, the important fact is established that Isa. 22:15-25 is not an entirely homogeneous prophecy. We are now in a position to inquire further into the significance of the break which was seen to exist between vss. 15-18 and vss. 19-23.

If vss. 20-23 are examined by themselves, apart from their connection with vss. 15-18 *through vs. 19*, the question may fairly be raised whether they are fully satisfied if interpreted as a promise to Eliakim of the office of major-domo. Cheyne and G. A. Smith seem to feel the remarkable reach of the promises vouchsafed to Eliakim,¹⁵ but most of the commentators have nothing to say on this subject. They apparently take for granted that the reference to the key of David's house in its present connection settles the question as to the nature of the office promised to Eliakim. But critics like Cheyne, Duhm, and Marti, who admit a break between vss. 15-18 and vss. 19-23, should be more on their guard in their interpretation of vss. 19-23. Now, the fact is that the characterization of Eliakim's office in vss. 20-23 suggests an office far higher than that of major-domo, exalted as that position was. מְשִׁלְתָּהּ is not applicable to this office. The word is regularly and properly translated in the Revised Version "dominion." The translators evidently felt the incongruity of "dominion" in Isa. 22:21, and here alone they translate the word by "government."¹⁶ But in no other place is it used

¹⁵ Cheyne speaks of "the strong language, *almost messianic in its tone*, with which Isaiah hails in spirit the elevation of his disciple Eliakim. Certainly the enthusiasm in these verses is remarkable." "It may be," says Smith, "that Isaiah has woven into these some expressions of even greater promise than usual. For this change of office-bearers was critical, and the overthrow of the 'party of action' meant to Isaiah the *beginning of the blessed future*."

¹⁶ The word is found in twelve other passages, exclusive of parallels. It is translated by the R. V. nine times "dominion," twice by the infinitive "to rule" (Gen. 1:16; Ps. 136:8, 9), and once by "power" (2 Chron. 32:9).

in such a restricted sense, and it is as inappropriate in Isa. 22:21, as the English word "dominion" would be, if it is really the office of major-domo into which Eliakim was to be installed. Again, Eliakim is to be "a father to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah." This would suggest the paternal care of a king for his subjects, rather than the authority of a major-domo. The word אֲבִנָּסָה is also a curious word to use in this connection. Elsewhere it is found only in the Priests' Code, and is used of the girdle of the priests. Such a term is more applicable to the office of a king, who seems at times to have exercised priestly functions, than to the office of major-domo. The key of the house of David might, indeed, suggest the latter office, but it is equally compatible with the royal office, and vs. 22b forcibly suggests that the power symbolized by the keys was the *supreme* power. The master of Shebna was not lost sight of (vs. 18b), but where is there room after vss. 20-23 for one higher than Eliakim? It is true that the office of major-domo was probably the highest office in the state next to that of the king. It was sometimes administered by the heir to the throne himself.¹⁷ We are also reminded that Joseph in Egypt was called father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler (בִּשְׁלָה) over all the land of Egypt, though he was not king.¹⁸ But, in spite of these scattered analogies, I cannot escape the impression that the combined force of the characterizations in vss. 20-23 suggests one who is to be absolutely supreme in the state. If this is true, Eliakim is not promised the office of Shebna, but the office of the king himself. It follows that the suffixes of the second person in vss. 20-23 would refer, not to Shebna, but to the reigning king. In that case the breach already constituted between vss. 15-18 and vss. 20-23 is seriously widened. In fact, all connection between the two sections is lost.

But what then of vs. 19? This verse undoubtedly is intended to suggest that Eliakim is to succeed to the office vacated by Shebna. We have seen that it is the link which connects vss. 15-18 and vss. 20-23 together. We will therefore be obliged either to abandon the interpretation of vss. 20-23 just proposed, in view of the unquestionable meaning of vs. 19, or to hold that vs. 19 is a gloss written by

¹⁷ 2 Kings 15:5.

¹⁸ Gen. 45:8; cf. 1 Macc. 11:32.

one who *misunderstood* vss. 20-23 and incorrectly saw in these verses the complement to vss. 15-18. If the data already reviewed were all the data available, it would no doubt be the part of prudence to acquiesce in the former alternative; but before this is done there is one important item yet to be considered.

IV. We must examine the relationship of Isa. 22:15-25 to Isa., chaps. 36 and 37. In chaps. 36 and 37 we again meet with Shebna and Eliakim. It is the crisis of Sennacherib's campaign. A fearful danger is threatening Jerusalem. The officers of the Assyrian king, headed by the arrogant Rabshak, are before the walls of the city demanding surrender. Hezekiah sends a committee to negotiate with the Rabshak (36:3). This committee is composed of Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, the major-domo, Shebna the scribe, and Joah, son of Asaph, the recorder. Later, when the full import of the Assyrian demands is made known, the king in despair sends the two men first mentioned to Isaiah (37:2). Here the positions of Shebna and Eliakim seem to be the reverse of what they were in Isa. 22. According to the title in 22:15*b*, Shebna was the major-domo, and, according to the usual interpretation of vss. 19-23, Eliakim is promised his place. In chap. 36 Eliakim is the major-domo. What more natural combination than to see in the position of Eliakim in 36:3 the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isa. 22! Eliakim now occupies the office of major-domo formerly occupied by Shebna.¹⁹ Thus Isa., chap. 36, is supposed to follow in point of time chap. 22. But on nearer inspection this apparently obvious combination is attended with considerable difficulty. According to chap. 36, Shebna is still in power. He does not fill the office of major-domo, it is true, but the office of scribe was also one of great importance. Not only does Shebna occupy an office of great dignity, but he is also appointed with Eliakim, who is supposed to have supplanted him, on a mission of the greatest responsibility, viz., to treat with the Assyrians. Above all, he is later actually asked to intercede with Isaiah in behalf of the king. How is this possible? Here is a person against whom Isaiah had pronounced the most terrible curse of banishment and death, still holding a position of great power and influence, and appointed by Hezekiah to intercede with the prophet who had opposed him.

¹⁹ The usual view.

Hezekiah wished to gain the support of Isaiah. Would he have sent one who was evidently *persona non grata* to the prophet?²⁰

Thus, while at first sight Isa., chaps. 36 and 37 seem to correspond very nicely with 22:19, 20-23, these chapters are incompatible with 22:15-18, if, as is usually held, they chronologically follow 22:15-18. This difficulty has been felt by all commentators and apologists. Two methods have been adopted to avoid it: (a) Vitranga, followed by Bredenkamp, supposes that there were two Shebnas. But this method of harmonization may safely be ignored. The name Shebna meets us nowhere else in the Bible except in these two scenes, both in the lifetime of Isaiah. The presumption is overwhelmingly in favor of the identity of person. This presumption is confirmed by a curious and significant coincidence between chaps. 36 and 22. We have seen reason to conclude from the data in chap. 22 that Shebna was a parvenu, and possibly a foreigner, a man of low origin, without pedigree. In beautiful accord with this is the fact that in chap. 36, while the names of the fathers of Eliakim and Joah are given, the name of Shebna's father is omitted. This coincidence can hardly be due to chance. (b) The favorite method of harmonists is to see in chap. 36 a hint of the beginning of Shebna's degradation. He is supposed to have been *degraded* from the office of major-domo to that of scribe, the complete fulfilment of the prophecy in the banishment and death of Shebna *conjecturally* taking place at a later date.²¹ But, after what has been said as to the dignified and responsible position of Shebna, and especially as to his relationship to Isaiah in chaps. 36 and 37, this method seems highly precarious.

If, on the other hand, we compare the positions of Shebna and Eliakim in Isa., chaps. 36 and 37, with the implications of 22:15-18, *instead of with vss. 19, 20-23*, an entirely different combination is at once suggested. The position of Shebna in chaps. 36 and 37, as compared with his position in 22:15-18, does not suggest a waning influence, "the beginning of his degradation," but rather the beginning of his ascendancy in the national life. He is not to be thought of as stepping down from the position of major-domo to the position

²⁰ Strongly urged by Vitranga, cited in Kamphausen, p. 52.

²¹ So Alexander, Delitzsch, Dillmann. Cf. also Cheyne: "(Shebna) simply fell from one office to another."

of scribe, but rather as climbing up from the position of scribe to the highest office in the land. How natural on this view is the indignation of Isaiah in 22:15-18! Shebna, the upstart and foreigner, has supplanted Eliakim, a native Jew, very possibly of noble birth, and presumably a man favored by the prophetic party (cf. 22:20-23), and is now occupying the highest and most influential office in the gift of the nation. How natural is Isa. 22:15-18 if placed *after* chaps. 36 and 37! How unnatural are chaps. 36 and 37 if placed *after* 22:15-18.²² Thus the relationship of chaps. 36 and 37 to 22:15-18, on the one hand, and to 22:19, 20-23, on the other, would seem to be very different. Chaps. 36 and 37 are most naturally interpreted as preceding 22:15-18, but as following 22:19, 20-23. This is suspicious.

The course of the argument thus far has led to the following tentative results: (1) The passage, Isa. 22:15-25, is not homogeneous. Vss. 24 and 25 at least are absolutely inconsistent with vss. 15-18 and 19:20-23. (2) Not only are vss. 24 and 25 critically doubtful but the original connection of vss. 20-23 with vss. 15-18 has also fallen under suspicion. There is a distinct break between these two sections, indicated by the change of person. The contents of vss. 20-23, when considered by themselves, suggest that Eliakim is promised a royal office rather than Shebna's office of major-domo. But if this is so, then vs. 19, which is the connecting link between vss. 15-18 and vss. 20-23, must be regarded as a gloss due to a misapprehension of the real meaning of vss. 20-23. Can so important a conclusion be corroborated by any independent lines of argument? (3) At this point the relationship of chap. 22 to chaps. 36 and 37 was considered, and a singular fact was discovered. Chaps. 36 and 37 appeared to be related to the two sections, 22:15-18 and 22:19, 20-23, in different ways. On the one hand, if compared with 22:19, 20-23 by themselves, chaps. 36 and 37 are naturally interpreted as the fulfilment of these verses, thus following them in point of time. On this view, chaps. 36 and 37 would come into direct collision with 22:15-18. On the other hand, if chaps. 36 and 37 are compared

²² This combination was long ago proposed by Calvin. It is strange that subsequent writers have not considered it more worthy of attention than they seem to have done.

with 22:15-18 by themselves, the relationship between the two passages can be most satisfactorily explained on the supposition that chaps. 36 and 37 precede 22:15-18 in point of time. But on this view the section 22:19, 20-23 loses all intelligible connection with chaps. 36 and 37. For if Eliakim was major-domo in chaps. 36 and 37, and was afterward supplanted by Shebna in 22:15-18, how is it that he is promised Shebna's office in 22:19, 20-23? Of course, it might be conjectured that 22:19-23 is a promise of *restoration* to an office formerly occupied by Eliakim,²³ but there is no hint in these verses that Eliakim had ever previously occupied this office. Thus, if we examine 22:15-18 and 19, 20-23 in the light of chaps. 36 and 37, what may be called the spectrum analysis of these two sections is seen to be very different. The suspicion raised as to their original unity is greatly increased, and consequently the suspicion that vs. 19, which connects these two incompatibles, is a gloss, receives strong corroboration.

But if vss. 15-18 and vss. 20-23 originally had nothing to do with each other, how did the glossator and author of vs. 19 come to make his mistake? Can the origin of this gloss be naturally explained? If it can, this will be a further confirmation of the correctness of the critical process which has been followed. The author of vs. 19 may be easily supposed to have made the following combination: He knew of Eliakim's position as major-domo from chaps. 36 and 37. He knew of Shebna's position from the title in 22:15*b*. He misunderstood the reference to the key of David's house in 22:22, supposing it to symbolize the office of major-domo. He then conjectured that chaps. 36 and 37 followed chap. 22, and therefore inferred that 22:20-23 was the complement of vss. 15-18, in which Eliakim was promised Shebna's office; and in this he has been followed by most of the critics who came after him. This process of reasoning, assumed for the author of vs. 19, involves two things: (*a*) that the title in vs. 15*b* is genuine, or at least thought to be genuine by the compiler of these prophecies, the author of vs. 19; and (*b*) that the author of vs. 19 is *not* the author of vss. 20-23. The author of vs. 19 makes his combination on the basis of the *extant data* furnished by the title, vs. 15*b*, the prophecy, vss. 20-23 and chaps. 36 and 37.

²³ This conjecture is actually made by Calvin.

This view of the critical relationships involved in 22:15-25 differs from the current critical view in several important points. Cheyne, Duhm, and Marti all deny the original unity of vss. 15-18 with vss. 19, 20-23, but they regard vs. 19 and vss. 20-23 as the work of the same writer. Duhm and Marti also ascribe the title in vs. 15b to this writer.²⁴ They all interpret vss. 20-23 as a promise to Eliakim of the office of major-domo. But what, then, is the historical significance of vss. 19-23? At this point the critical opinions of these writers appear to me to land them in difficulties. Cheyne suggests that vss. 19-23 are a later correction of vss. 15-18. Shebna was not banished after all; he was only degraded to a lower office (chaps. 36 and 37). Vss. 19-23 make the necessary correction. Shebna was only to be supplanted by Eliakim. This view does not seem to me to do any sort of justice to the *temper* of vss. 20-23. The writer of these verses is not interested in the literal fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies. What he is interested in is *Eliakim*. His interest is not that of a dogmatist, but of a partisan.

Duhm remarks:

I hold vss. 19-23 for the supplement of a man who had 36:3 before his eyes, and perhaps also was in some way or other interested in the family of Eliakim, and vss. 24 ff. for a second addition by a man who was hostile to the family of Eliakim, who therefore (?), moreover, will not have lived before the exile. Vss. 15-18 were composed conjecturally during the reign of Hezekiah.

Later on, Duhm says again:

Unfortunately we do not know what moved the author of vss. 24-25 to such animosity toward Eliakim and his family. But the narrative of the bad Korachites in the Pentateuch, or of the bad inhabitants of Gibeah and Jabes (Judg., chaps. 19, 20), sufficiently demonstrate that the internal quarrels in the *post-exilic* community also found expression in the canon.

Duhm thus expressly places vss. 24 and 25 in the post-exilic period, and by implication vss. 19-23 also. But he gives no reason for this. His *darum* ("therefore") in the first citation is left quite unsupported. The only specific argument which Marti adduces for the post-exilic origin of vss. 19-23 is drawn from the supposedly late words מְשִׁלְתָּהּ and אֲבִנְיָהּ.²⁵ Granted that the former word is usually found in

²⁴ The historical trustworthiness of the title is left by them an open question.

²⁵ So also Cheyne.

later writers, it is one of those general terms which are too characterless to furnish sure chronological data. The latter term rather makes in favor of a pre-exilic origin. In the Priests' Code it is regularly used of the priestly girdle. In Isa. 22:21 it is a part of the insignia of a secular office. If vss. 20-23 really refer to the royal office, the **אַבְנֵי־טָבַח** would suggest a priestly function connected with it, which is decidedly a pre-exilic conception. But this late date of vss. 19-23 and 24-25, so lamely supported on linguistic grounds, is very unsatisfactory on historical grounds. Why should post-exilic writers be such loyal supporters or bitter opponents of a man who lived two hundred years before? Are we dealing here with Macaulays or Froudes, who fight over again the battles of their heroes with all the ardor of contemporaries? Marti, indeed, seeks to restrict the hostility to the family of Eliakim rather than to Eliakim himself, later opponents of the family seeking to discredit its ancestor. But this will not explain the enthusiasm for Eliakim manifested in vss. 20-23. Or can this, too, be interpreted of the pride of a descendant of Eliakim living two centuries later? This is certainly unnatural. Surely, the intense feeling of loyalty on the one hand, and hostility on the other, to the person of Eliakim, expressed in vss. 20-23 and 24-25, are most satisfactorily explained on the supposition that these passages are due, not to any antiquarian interest in this man, or to jealousy for the honor of a remote ancestor, but to an immediate personal interest in the living issues which gathered about him. Marti seems to feel this when he says that

the ridicule and jealousy which the writer [of vss. 24, 25] expends, shows how willingly he makes this addition, and that he was no friend to Eliakim's family. . .

It is not outside the range of possibility that this addition is a hint at the death of the godless high-priest Alkimus (ὁ καὶ Ἰάκειμος κληθεὶς, Josephus, *Antiq.*, XII, 9, 7 = **אַלְיָקִים**) in 160 B. C., and the deposition of his family from the high priestly dignity.

Here is found, indeed, a burning political crisis which would excite party passions, and would in a measure account for the temper of vss. 20-25. But why is this Maccabean Alkimus brought into such close connection with the Shebna of Isaiah's day? The combination is altogether unnatural. If the critical analysis and interpretation suggested above be adopted, according to which vs. 19 is a gloss

incorrectly uniting a prophecy of threats against Shebna with a promise to Eliakim of the throne, may not a situation in Isaiah's own day be discovered which would meet every condition of our problem and throw an interesting light on an obscure chapter in Isaiah's career, without our being compelled to resort to Maccabean political conditions?

The authenticity of vss. 15-18 may be accepted without discussion. The style marks the master's hand, and there is nothing in the passage to raise suspicion against it. But what is the date of this scene? We have found that in all probability it followed the events described in Isa., chaps. 36 and 37, at the time of the invasion of Sennacherib, i. e., late in Isaiah's lifetime. But if the Shebna prophecy is once placed subsequent to the campaign of Sennacherib, its approximate date can be fixed with considerable accuracy.

It is to the period immediately subsequent to the failure of Sennacherib to take Jerusalem that the reforms of Hezekiah described in 2 Kings 18:4 ff. are most probably to be referred.²⁶ The prestige gained by Isaiah, the great preacher of reform, through the signal fulfilment of his prophecies in the overthrow of the Assyrians and the deliverance of the Jewish capital, seems to have afforded the reform party which existed in Jerusalem just the opportunity they needed to come into power. This power they evidently managed to retain during the remainder of Hezekiah's reign;²⁷ for it is not until Manasseh's reign that we read of an anti-prophetic reaction.

Now, Eliakim was evidently favored by prophecy. He may well have been the secular or political leader of the reform party. Shebna, on the other hand, is as evidently obnoxious to prophecy, and there is every reason to suppose that he was the leader of the opposition. We have seen that the intensity of Isaiah's hostility to Shebna must have had a deeper cause than lay on the surface. But as the head

²⁶ R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 356 ff.; *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 352; Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, p. 25; Smend, *Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte*, p. 273; H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History*, p. 254.

²⁷ If the campaign of Sennacherib described in Isa., chaps. 36 and 37, and 2 Kings 18:17 ff. refers to a second campaign, subsequent to 701 and toward the close of Isaiah's reign, as I am strongly inclined to believe, then the ascendancy of the reform party must have been very brief.

of the opposition party there was no opportunity for Shebna to come to the front or oust Eliakim from office in these closing years of Hezekiah's reign. The reform party was in control, as we have just seen, during this period. *Accordingly, if the Shebna prophecy is once dated subsequent to the campaign of Sennacherib, there is no suitable place for it until we come down to the accession of Manasseh.* On the other hand, it must be placed very early in Manasseh's reign, in order to have it brought within the limits of Isaiah's lifetime. Isaiah could scarcely have survived the accession of Manasseh many years. He must already have reached an advanced age at the death of Hezekiah.²⁸ Thus the Shebna prophecy must be ascribed to the period of Manasseh's accession. But this date, to which we are thus logically driven, is intrinsically a most fitting date for the prophecy. Manasseh was a child when he came to the throne. On the other hand, Isaiah was an old man. We know that there was a powerful anti-prophetic party in Jerusalem. For a large part of his life Isaiah had been in a hopeless minority. The reforms of Hezekiah do not seem to have sprung from the people spontaneously. They were quite probably forced upon them from above. The masses themselves were wedded to the half-idolatrous nature-worship of Jehovah which characterized so much of the religion of the royal period. The stern morality and spiritual theology of the prophets were too high for them. They could not attain unto this standard. A violent reaction set in during Manasseh's reign. What is more natural than to suppose that the scheming Shebna took advantage of this state of affairs—the youth of Manasseh, the age of Isaiah, the lusts of the people—to put himself at the head of the reactionary movement, accomplish the downfall of Eliakim to whose office he succeeded, and practically seize the reigns of government during Manasseh's minority?

Such a situation would amply explain the burning indignation of Isaiah as expressed in our prophecy. It seemed to the aged prophet

²⁸ Isaiah received his inaugural vision in the death-year of Uzziah, *ca.* 740 B. C. Manasseh did not come to the throne much before 680 B. C. This would allow a prophetic career of about sixty years to Isaiah, and an age of upward of eighty years, if we assume that he was at least twenty years old at the time of his vision. This would be a long, though not unnaturally long, career. But it is evident that his career must not be prolonged unduly into Manasseh's reign.

as if all the good work of his life, brought to fruition in the closing years of Hezekiah's reign, was now to be undone. This must not be. He girds himself once more for the battle. Isa. 22:15-18 are to be construed, not so much as a prophecy, a simple prediction, as an attempt to drive Shebna from office. Did Isaiah succeed? At this point we are left in the dark, though the darkness is no denser than that in which the earlier commentators groped about. In fact, there is considerably more light. If the above combination is adopted, it must be admitted that Isaiah probably did *not* succeed. The reactionary party seems to have remained in control during the entire reign of Manasseh. In that case it is not likely that Shebna lost his grip on his office.²⁹ Is Isaiah then discredited as a prophet? If the work of a prophet is simply infallibly to forecast the future, and if he must be discredited when his predictions are not fulfilled, then I suppose the theory proposed would discredit Isaiah, just as it would discredit the Pythian Apollo.³⁰ Fortunately, the moral significance of Isaiah's career does not depend on the fulfilment of this or that specific prediction.³¹ We are dealing, not with a walking oracle, but with a great character and a noble life. But is not the failure of 22:15-18 construed, not as a bald prediction, but as an attempt to unseat Shebna discreditable to Isaiah? Are martyr deaths failures? Is Paul, the Roman prisoner, a failure? Isaiah in his inaugural vision was foredoomed to such a failure. Therein lay the solemn tragedy of his life, the condition for the exhibition of its moral grandeur.

Let us now turn to vss. 20-23. If this is a promise of the throne

²⁹ If it is thought desirable to find a fulfilment of the prediction at all hazards, it might be assumed that Shebna later lost favor at court on purely personal grounds, or possibly became fatally involved at the time of the great revolt of Shamash-shum-ukin, which seems to have affected pretty much the whole of the Assyrian empire, or even that he fell with Amon in the conspiracy against that king forty or fifty years later. The latter view would not be excluded on chronological grounds, if the scene in Isa., chap. 36, were placed at the end of Hezekiah's reign instead of in 701.

³⁰ Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, V, 4) draws a parallel between the Greek oracles and Isaiah which is characteristic of the differences between the ancient and the modern views of prophecy.

³¹ Luther himself says that "though hay, straw, and wood were sometimes gathered by these same good and faithful teachers of Scripture . . . , yet the foundation remains" (*Werke*, Erlangen ed., Vol. LXIII, p. 379; cf. also Vol. VIII, p. 23).

to Eliakim, this prophecy aims at revolution. In the political situation of Manasseh's reign, is there anything to suggest so serious a political disturbance? Undoubtedly. 2 Kings 21:16 tells us that "Manasseh shed innocent blood till he had filled Jerusalem from end to end." Was this a mere wanton outbreak on the part of Manasseh, due simply to lust of blood? Scarcely. There was something back of all this. It is significant that the redactor of Kings, who was a strong sympathizer with the reform movements in Judah, refers to the blood shed by Manasseh as "*innocent*." Here, too, the conjecture is not at all hazardous that this innocent blood is the blood of the reform party which had attempted to overthrow Manasseh. It was innocent from the redactor's point of view. Reform movements did not stickle at such violent measures. Elisha anointed Jehu to do his bloody work upon the Baal-worshiping house of Ahab, and the redactor of Kings praises him for its successful performance.³² The deuteronomic law, under the influence of which Kings was written, places idolators under the terrible "*ban*."³³ Thus moral scruples would scarcely stand in the way of a reforming revolution. In Amon's day there is express reference to a revolution, which is probably to be attributed to the reforming party.³⁴ Hence we may very easily infer from the massacres of Manasseh (or were they really instigated by Shebna?) that a conspiracy had been formed against him by the prophetic party, which proposed to place Eliakim on the throne. It may be objected that Eliakim was not of the line of David, and that in Judah the rights of David's line to the throne were undisputed by anyone. But, for all we know, Eliakim may have been of royal birth,³⁵ though of a subordinate line. The very fact that he occupied the highest office in the land, which the heir to the throne himself at times administered, and that the occupancy of the position by Shebna, the "*nobody*," stirred the indignation of Isaiah so profoundly, suggests that only those of noble birth were regularly eligible to this office.³⁶ The arguments drawn from vss.

³² 2 Kings, chaps. 9 and 10, especially 10:30.

³³ Deut., chaps. 13 and 17. ³⁴ Kittel, *Geschichte der Hebräer*, Vol. II, p. 320.

³⁵ So Calvin, though his exegetical argument in support of this view is unsound.

³⁶ Can the "*churl*" (better "*intriguer*") of Isa. 32:5 ff. be a veiled reference to Shebna?

24 and 25 that Eliakim's family was ignoble are hardly fair, for these verses express the opinions of his opponents. Neither does vs. 23 necessitate such an inference. The promise is that Eliakim should bring glory to his family, but on our interpretation of vss. 20-23 this only expresses the hope that his presumably subordinate line would become the line of succession.

But now the interesting question arises: Did Isaiah promise the crown to Eliakim, and did he, therefore, urge him on to revolution, as Elisha urged Jehu? The possibility that Isaiah not only opposed Shebna, but espoused the cause of the former major-domo, and actually sought to place Eliakim on the throne, cannot be disputed if the proposed historical combinations are adopted. In that case Eliakim must unquestionably have been of the royal line, for Isaiah's hopes seem to have centered in that line, and it can scarcely be imagined that he planned to dethrone the Davidic dynasty. However, it is doubtful if he would have gone so far as even to attempt the deposition of the reigning king. The career of Isaiah, so far as we can understand it, does not lead us to think that he would resort to such violent measures. In the days of Ahaz, bad as that king was, Isaiah respected the king's position. His conduct is everywhere marked by the daring courage of the reformer, but not by the revolutionary spirit. The character of Isaiah makes it, therefore, questionable whether he was the author of vss. 20-23. The rather unfortunate confusion of the two figures of nail (or tent-pin) and throne in vs. 23³⁷ may also be urged against the authorship of the master-stylist of the Old Testament, though this argument by itself would have little weight in my mind. We know, however, that there were other prophets at work in Manasseh's day. The redactor of Kings seems to preserve a reminiscence of their activities.³⁸ It is quite possible that the prophetic party, encouraged by Isaiah's attitude toward Shebna, went a step farther than their great leader would have approved. Luther was unable to check his peasants when they once took the bit between their teeth. Isaiah attacked

³⁷ Cf. n. 13, *supra*.

³⁸ Cf. 2 Kings 21:10-16. The striking figure in vs. 13 suggests some original source. Cf. also Winckler's interesting views as to the date of Isa., chap. 21 (*Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen*, pp. 120-25).

Shebna. The prophetic party, under the leadership of Eliakim, attacks the king. The consequences were tragic in the extreme. Eliakim probably perished, and vss. 24 and 25 express the contemptuous exultation of the anti-prophetic party over the fall of "the man who would be king." Isaiah also probably fell an innocent victim to the fanaticism of his own party, and died in the massacre with which the ill-timed conspiracy was crushed. The book of Kings gives but one brief verse to this massacre; yet it seems to have left an indelible impression upon subsequent generations. It is to this terrible deed that the Babylonian exile is attributed both by Jeremiah and the redactor of Kings.³⁹ Is not the profound impression made by Manasseh's deeds, the horror with which they were remembered by later writers, best explained if Isaiah, the prince of the prophets, was one of the apostate king's victims?⁴⁰ The Jewish legend of the martyrdom of Isaiah under Manasseh, preserved in the Mishna and in the apochryphal book of the Martyrdom of Isaiah, and probably alluded to in Heb. 11:37, will thus have a basis in fact. Isaiah died a martyr.

³⁹2 Kings 23:26; 24:3, 4; Jer. 15:4.

⁴⁰ Winckler, *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, p. 275, brings this massacre into suggestive connection with the political upheavals at the time of the great revolt of Shamash-shum-ukin. If this combination is correct, Isaiah's death cannot be brought into connection with these events, since he could scarcely have lived to so late a period. The considerations advanced in this article, however, seem to me strongly to favor a date for these massacres early in Manasseh's reign. The prophetic party may, of course, have been again active at the time of the great revolt.